



## ANCIENT INDIAN JUGGLERS

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- Editor

**T**he amazing performances of the Eastern Magi, of which we have authentic details in the Old Testament, have been the subject of speculation rather than inquiry as interesting as it is puzzling. An attempt to investigate by what agency they were effected would be trenching upon delicate ground, ground already occupied by the controversy between the authors of the "Essays and Reviews" and their opponents.

We restrict ourselves to the speculation, and even this only by way of suggesting, whether the jugglers of India, whose performances so far outstrip any by their European counterparts, may not trace their origin to those wise men of the East from whom they derive their lore in spells and charms, if not their feats of muscular agility. There seems, at least, much probability that the performers who frequent the public wells and halting-places in the East exhibiting feats of legerdemain for the amusement of the travelling merchants are of the same family not only of the snake-charmers, but of the Garodi (juggler) tribe, who are known also by the

name of the Shudgarshid (from *Shudgar*, burial-ground; and *shid*, proficient), and whose detestable trade it is to prowl about burning and burialgrounds to collect certain pieces of human bone, with which they are supposed to work their sorceries.

The race commonly understood by the appellation of Indian jugglers have, however, no such repulsive characteristics, though they pretend to magical powers, and many of their performances, whether in the way of ingenuity or physical activity, are absolutely marvellous, and have been handed down from the most remote periods.

In a Persian manuscript of great antiquity, containing the memoirs of the Emperor Jahanguir, written by himself, there is a remarkable description of the operations of certain Bengal jugglers, who were called upon to perform for the entertainment of the court.\*

The account is given by the Emperor, who was so struck with astonishment at the wonders which these men wrought that he ascribes them to supernatural power. The performers were first desired to produce upon the spot, from the seed, ten mulberry trees. They immediately sowed, in separate places, seed in the ground, and in a few minutes after a mulberry plant was seen springing from each of the seeds, every plant as it rose in the air shooting forth leaves and branches, and yielding excellent fruit. In the same manner, and by a similar occult process, apple-trees, mangoes, fig-trees, almond, and walnut trees, were



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created, all producing fruit, which Jahangueir declares was exquisite to the taste. Nor was this all:—

*Before the trees were removed there appeared among the foliage birds of such surprising beauty in colour, and shape, and melody of song, as the world never saw before. At the close of the operation, the foliage, as in autumn, was seen to put on its variegated tints, and the trees gradually disappeared into the earth from which they had been made to spring.*

Incredible as this relation appears, we have the assurance of Major Price, the distinguished Orientalist, by whom Jahangueir's memoirs were translated, that he has himself witnessed kindred operations on the western side of India, but that a sheet was employed to cover the process. "I have, however," he adds, "no conception of the means by which they were accomplished, unless the jugglers had the trees about them, in every stage, from the seedling to the fruit."

From another of the "specious miracles" narrated by the Emperor we might suspect that these famous conjurers had anticipated the modern discovery of the lime or electric light:—

*One night, in the very middle of the night, when half this globe was wrapped in darkness, one of these seven men stripped himself almost naked, and, having spun himself swiftly round several times, he took a sheet with which he covered himself, and from beneath the sheet drew out a*

*resplendent mirror, by the radiance of which a light so powerful was produced as to have illuminated the hemisphere to an incredible distance round; to such a distance, indeed, that we have the attestation of travellers to the fact, who declared that, on a particular night, the same night on which the exhibition took place, and at the distance of ten days' journey, they saw the atmosphere so powerfully illuminated as to exceed the brightness of the brightest day they had ever seen.*

Another of their feats is curious:—

*They placed in my presence a large seething-pot, or cauldron, and, filling it partly with water, they threw into it eight of the smaller mauns of Irâk of rice, when, without the application of the smallest spark of fire, the cauldron forthwith began to boil. In a little time they took off the lid, and drew from it nearly a hundred platters full, each with a stewed fowl at top!*

The following is more extraordinary still:—

*They produced a man whom they divided limb from limb, actually severing his head from the body. They scattered these mutilated members along the ground, and in this state they lay for some time. They then extended a sheet or curtain over the spot, and one of the men, putting himself under the sheet, in a few minutes came from below followed by the individual supposed to have been cut into joints, in perfect health and condition, and one might have safely sworn that he*

*had never received wound or injury whatever.*

But even this process, astounding as it seems, is outdone by what are next described, which must have been optical deceptions:—

*They caused two tents to be set up, the one at*

*the distance of a bow-shot from the other, the doors or entrances being placed exactly opposite; they raised the tent-walls all around, and desired that it might be particularly observed that they were entirely empty. Then fixing the tent-walls to the ground, two of the seven men entered, one into each tent, none of the other men entering either of the tents. Thus prepared, they said they would undertake to bring out of the tents any animal we chose to mention, whether bird or beast, and set them in conflict with each other. Khaun-e-Jahaun, with a smile of incredulity, required them to show us a battle between two ostriches. In a few minutes two ostriches of the largest size issued, one from either tent, and attacked each other with such fury that the blood was seen streaming from their heads. They were, at the same time, so equally matched that neither could get the better of the other, and they were therefore separated by the men and conveyed within the tents. In short, they continued to produce from either tent whatever animal we chose to name, and before our eyes set them to fight in the manner I have attempted to describe.*

He then goes on to tell that the performers were furnished with a bow and about fifty steel-pointed arrows:—

*One of the seven men took the bow in hand, and shooting an arrow into the air, the shaft stood fixed at a considerable height; he shot a second arrow, which flew straight to the first, to which it became attached; and so with every one of the remaining arrows to the last of all, which, striking the sheaf suspended in the air, the whole immediately broke asunder and came at once to the earth.*

In flexibility and physical vigour the jugglers of India are to this day unrivalled. Mr. Fane assures us that at Delhi he saw several fellows jump down into a well ninety feet deep in pursuit of a rupee thrown in to tempt them. There was a slanting passage on the opposite side, by which they got out; but the perpendicular plunge was performed again and again with the utmost eagerness both by men and boys.



Men of this class in Madras are notable for their lithe and supple bodies. One of them will place a tall ladder upright on the ground and wind himself in and out through the rings [*sic*] until he reaches the top, descending in the same manner, keeping the ladder, which has no other support whatever, in a perpendicular position.

Their exhibitions with edged and pointed weapons are no less surprising, though not so pleasing, swallowing the sword being an operation so common as to be left only to the inferior performers. A woman (for there are female jugglers quite as expert as the men) will dip the point of a sword in black pigment, fix the hilt firmly in the ground, and then, after a few rapid whirlings in the air, will take off a portion of the pigment with her *eyelid*.

There is another of these perilous feats of which they make nothing. A sword and four daggers are placed in the earth, with their points upwards, at such a distance from each other as barely to admit of a man's head between them; the operator plants a scimitar firmly in the ground, sits down behind it, and suddenly at one bound throws himself over the scimitar, pitching his head exactly in the centre of the space encircled by the daggers, and then, by a reverse spring, turns over and resumes his place on the other side of the sword. It is an act of very ordinary merit for them to walk upon the edges of sabres, and to stick a sword in the ground and step upon the point in crossing over it. Sometimes a piece of thin linen is stretched out slightly in the hands of four persons, and the performer will walk across it without forcing it from the grasp of the holders, or even perceptibly ruffling it.

\* This Prince was the great grandson of Baber, the restorer of the dynasty of Timur, and the son of the renowned Akbar, by whose chivalrous valour in the field the twenty-two provinces, then composing the empire India, were firmly subdued and tranquillised. Jahangueir succeeded to the empire in the year 1605, at a period when the ordinary annual revenue is estimated to have been fifty-two millions of our money, and when the standing army of the Monarch consisted of three hundred thousand horse, and as many foot.

(Source: The Illustrated London News, "Relics of the Past" column, 27 April 1861)

## THE "WOW!" MYSTERY TURNS 30!

Thirty years ago on 15 August 1977, astronomer Dr Jerry R. Ehman was looking over a printout of radio data from Ohio State University's Big Ear Radio Observatory when he saw a string of code so remarkable that he had to circle it and then scribbled "Wow!" in the margin. This comment has since become the name of the signal.

Was it a burst of human-made interference, or an alien broadcast from the stars? No one knows. The source of the "Wow!" signal has never been heard from again—even though astronomers have looked for it dozens of times.

Now the SETI Institute is gearing up to look for it one more time, using the latest tool for seeking signals from extraterrestrial civilisations: the Allen Telescope Array in California. The array combines observations from dozens of separate six-metre-wide (20-foot-wide) radio dishes to produce an instrument that will eventually become more sensitive than the world's largest single-dish telescope, the Arecibo Observatory.

"Once the Allen Telescope Array is up and running, and that should be later this year, there's going to be a small project in which we'll look at the same section where the 'Wow!' signal was detected, and of course the same spot on the radio dial," said Seth Shostak, senior astronomer at the SETI Institute. Although that area of the sky has been searched dozens of times before, the Allen Telescope Array will

bring more sensitivity and wider spectral coverage to the quest, Shostak said.

After the single radio burst was detected, astronomers tried to track down a terrestrial cause. But they could find no glitch in the system, and no source that could have explained the strength and the frequency of the seconds-long signal. Since then, the "Wow!" signal has stood as one of the central enigmas for alien-hunters, even inspiring a scene in *The X-Files*.

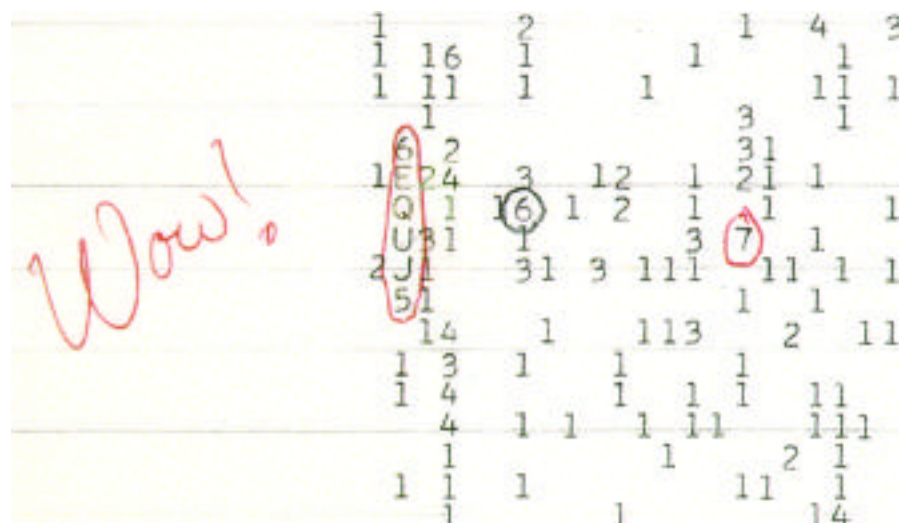
Ehman said aliens weren't the first thing that came to his mind when he saw the Big Ear data and wrote his famous word.

"The 'Wow!' was just an instantaneous response in writing," he said. "I had no expectations, other than: 'Here's something extremely interesting—and gee, let's try to find out what it is, or what it isn't.'"

Ehman recently updated his own report on the "Wow!" signal for the 30th anniversary, but the report's conclusion hasn't changed over all this time.

"It's still an open question what the source of the signal was," he told me. "We just don't have enough information to determine that... We just can't draw any conclusion other than it still allows for the possibility that it was a signal from an extraterrestrial civilization."

(Source: by Alan Boyle, 15 August 2007, <http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2007/08/15/319127.aspx>. "The Big Ear Wow! Signal (30th Anniversary Report)" by Jerry R. Ehman, PhD, dated 2 August 2007, is at <http://www.bigear.org/Wow30th/wow30th.htm>.)



This image is from a scan of a colour copy of the original computer printout taken several years after the 1977 arrival of the "Wow!" signal and after the printout had faded noticeably.

(Source: <http://www.bigear.org/Wow30th/wow30th.htm>)

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## 30th ANNIVERSARY OF TV HIJACK BY EXTRATERRESTRIALS November 1977

In southern England on Saturday evening 26th November 1977—nearly 30 years ago—an unidentified voice broke into a broadcast by Independent Television News and delivered a 600-word statement, live, in English, to the viewers. The statement lasted three minutes and 47 seconds, and the sound file is now accessible on YouTube (<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=thfL9hZW3uM>).

The total sound-hack lasted for about six minutes, starting at 5.10 pm. A UK Government agency tried to block the signal, but failed. Thousands of people telephoned the TV station and the police. The broadcasting authorities themselves issued three apologies on air. The full texts of those apologies are below. The authorities called it a "rogue transmission" and a "hoax". The source of the "hoax" was never identified. The full text of the ET Vrillon's November 1977 message is as follows:

"This is the voice of Vrillon, a representative of the Ashtar Galactic Command, speaking to you. For many years you have seen us as lights in the skies. We speak to you now in peace and wisdom as we have done to your brothers and sisters all over this, your planet Earth.

"We come to warn you of the destiny of your race and your world, so that you may communicate to your fellow beings the course you must take to avoid the disasters which threaten your world, and the beings on other worlds around you. This is in order that you may share in the great awakening, as the planet passes into the New Age of Aquarius. The New Age can be a time of great peace and evolution for your race, but only if your rulers are made aware of the evil forces that can overshadow their judgements."

"Be still now and listen, for your chance may not come again. All your weapons of evil must be removed. The time for conflict is now past, and the race of which you are a part may proceed to the higher stages of its evolution if you show yourselves worthy to do this. You have but a short time to learn to live together in peace and goodwill.

"Small groups all over the planet are learning this, and exist to pass on the light of the dawning New Age to you all. You

are free to accept or reject their teachings, but only those who learn to live in peace will pass to the higher realms of spiritual evolution.

"Hear now the voice of Vrillon, a representative of the Ashtar Galactic Command, speaking to you. Be aware also that there are many false prophets and guides operating in your world. They will suck your energy from you—the energy you call money—and will put it to evil ends and give you worthless dross in return.

"Your inner divine self will protect you from this. You must learn to be sensitive to the voice within that can tell you what is truth and what is confusion, chaos and untruth. Learn to listen to the voice of truth which is within you...and lead yourselves onto the path of evolution. This is our message to our dear friends. We have watched you growing for many years as you,

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– Vrillon, Ashtar Galactic Command  
26 November 1977

too, have watched our lights in your skies... There are more beings on and around your world than your scientists admit.

"We are deeply concerned about you and your path towards the light and will do all we can to help you. Have no fears, seek only to know yourselves, and live in harmony with the ways of your planet Earth. We here at the Ashtar Galactic Command thank you for your attention. We are now leaving the planes of your existence. May you be blessed by the supreme love and truth of the cosmos."

The full texts of the broadcasting authorities' three apologies for the ET's "rogue transmission" are as follows. The first two were parts of ITN TV news bulletins later in the same evening and the third was broadcast on Independent Radio that night.

(1) "We understand that viewers in some parts of the region are receiving a break-

through in sound. We're sorry about this, and we're doing our best to rectify the fault."

(2) "Finally, back home, engineers are trying to trace the source of what they call a 'rogue transmission' which lasted about six minutes during ITN's early evening news bulletin. It affected viewers in the Berkshire and Hampshire areas served by the Hannington transmitter. They heard a voice which cut across what I was reading. The voice said: 'Earthlings, lay down your arms. This is a message from outer space.' Well, thousands of viewers later phoned Southern Television, the police and ITN here. A spokesman for the Independent Broadcasting Authority said: 'This is the first incident of its kind in Britain.' Winchester police said some people were frightened by the hoax message. They said they sent an officer to calm down one woman. Well, I hope nothing's interrupted this bulletin wherever you are this evening. From all of us here, goodnight."

(3) "The Independent Broadcasting Authority is at a loss to explain the mysterious message that broke into a Southern Television news broadcast. The slow, deep voice proclaimed, in part: 'All your weapons of evil must be destroyed. You only have a short time to learn to live in peace.' The station was immediately besieged by worried telephone callers demanding an explanation. But as the information officer for the Broadcasting Authority, John Ginnery, says, there could be several different causes of the message: 'Well, we don't know for sure that it was a pirate call. We know that there were some voices-over saying certain things of which we haven't got an exact record. We've had a lot of accounts, obviously, a lot of people have been phoning us and other people about it. We simply don't know what it was. Broadcasts, of course, are monitored at an operations centre, but there, there was simply a mumble and there was some picture distortion. We had a lot of reports in, but, as I say, we simply don't know what it was.' Independent Radio News, it's three minutes past twelve."

Sources: *Alcuin Bramerton's blog*, 17 August 2007, <http://alcuinbramerton.blogspot.com/2007/08/extraterrestrial-television-hijack.html>; *YouTube posting*, 27 July 2007, <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=thfL9hZW3uM>